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THE RESONANCES OF THE SONG OF ARES AND APHRODITE

BY

M.J. ALDEN

The song of Demodocus on the love-affair of Ares and Aphrodite (θ 266-369) has had a rather mixed reception.¹⁾ The risqué subject matter was condemned in antiquity as inappropriate for poetry, and it was deemed improper to present the gods in such a light (Plato, *Rep.* 310C; Xenophanes 21B11 D-K). The comic circumstances in which the gods appear in this burlesque have been attributed to a deterioration in piety (for literature see Burkert n.1.), but as the scholiast to θ 267 points out, the immediate narrator is not Homer: the song is performed by Demodocus²⁾, and his frivolous gods are entirely suitable for a song sung to the pleasure-loving Phaeacians³⁾. The story of Ares and Aphrodite shares its theme of (in)fidelity in marriage with the general theme of the *Odyssey* (and *Iliad*), even if matters such as adultery are taken lightly by the gods, but in deadly

1) For those who athetize it, see Schol. Ar. *Pax* 778. For a summary of modern opinion that the song is an interpolation, see W. Burkert, *Das Lied von Ares und Aphrodite*, RhM 103 (1960), 130-44, n.3. G. M. Bolling, *The External Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Oxford 1925), 238-40 condemned lines 334-343. It is vindicated as Homeric by W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer*, I (Macmillan 1947), 338; Burkert n. 15; M. J. Apthorp, *The Manuscript Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Heidelberg 1980), 87-91; A. F. Garvie, *Homer, Odyssey VI-VIII* (Cambridge 1994), 293-4.

Similarities in language and subject matter have been observed in the divine assembly in A; the Διὸς Ἀπάτη in Ξ (already noted by W. E. Gladstone, *Studies in Homer and the Homeric Age*, II (Oxford 1858), 461-5); and in the battle of the gods in Υ/Φ (Burkert 134-9; A. Lesky, *Griechen lachen über ihre Götter*, WHB 4 (1961), 38-9). Lucian mentions it as the subject matter for pantomime: *Salt.* 63. He exploits its comic possibilities in the idea of Ares' lookout, who went to sleep (*Somn.* 3: cf. Eust. *Comm. ad Odysseam* 1598 62) and the invitation to the gods to view the guilty pair (*D.Deor.* 21).

2) J.H. Gaisser, *A Structural Analysis of the Digressions in the Iliad and the Odyssey*, HSPH 73 (1969), 1-43 suggests Homer may be using this song to parody the repetitive techniques of his rivals (32-4).

3) C. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge Mass. 1958), 289.

earnest among mortals⁴). Like the Oresteia-story, the story of Ares and Aphrodite offers a thematic contrast to the primary theme of the loyalty of Odysseus and Penelope⁵). Odysseus enjoys the song (θ 366-7), and does not respond to it by weeping, as he does while Demodocus tells the tale of his quarrel with Achilles (θ 75, 83-95), and later the tale of his entry into Troy in the Wooden Horse (θ 500-534). Athenaeus regarded Demodocus' song about Ares and Aphrodite as a hint to Odysseus for the slaughter of the suitors, in that even the lame-footed could overcome the valiant Ares⁶). The method to be employed is guile.

Modern treatments concentrate on the relevance of the song of Ares and Aphrodite to its immediate context in θ⁷), and on similarities between Odysseus and Hephaestus⁸). Associated with these are a whole series of correspondences between this second song of Demodocus and the ἀναγνώρισις of Penelope and Odysseus. Correspondences have also been noted between the song of Ares and Aphrodite and other story-patterns in the *Odyssey*⁹). Odysseus and

4) Burkert 1960; K. Rüter, *Odysseeinterpretationen: Untersuchungen zum ersten Buch und zur Phaiakia* (Göttingen 1969), 62-3; C.W. Macleod, *Homer, Iliad XXIV* (Cambridge 1982), 3-4; C.G. Brown, *Ares, Aphrodite, and the laughter of the gods*, *Phoenix* 43 (1989), 283-93, 293; U. Hölscher, *Die Odyssee* (Munich 1990), 271; Δ.Ν. Μαρωνίτης, *Ομήρου Οδύσσεια* (Athens 1992), 67; Garvie 294.—For the penalties for adultery, see K. Latte, *Beiträge zum griechischen Strafrecht*, in: E. Berneker (ed.), *Zur griechischen Rechtsgeschichte* (Darmstadt 1968), 263-314: 284, 301 (Drakon), 304, 306-7, 312.

5) W. Marg, *Homer über die Dichtung* (Munster 1957), 14-5; Ø. Andersen, *Myth, Paradigm and Spatial Form in the Iliad*, in: J.M. Bremer, I.J.F. de Jong, J. Kalff, (ed.), *Homer: Beyond Oral Poetry* (Amsterdam 1987), 1-13: 9.

6) Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 5. 192 d/e; Burkert 142.

7) B.K. Braswell, *The Song of Ares and Aphrodite; Theme and Relevance to Odyssey 8*, *Hermes* 110 (1982), 129-37 demonstrates the correspondences between Euryalus (whose handsome appearance belies the dullness of his mind) and Ares (who is handsome but δειλός). Euryalus must compensate Odysseus for his insult, as Ares must compensate (after a fashion) Hephaestus for his offence.—The three songs of Demodocus are all concerned with guile set against violence: see S. D. Olson, *Odyssey 8: Guile, Force, and the Subversive Poetics of Desire*, *Arethusa* 22 (1989), 135-45. (See also A. Thornton, *People and Themes in Homer's Odyssey* (London 1970), 44-45; J. S. Clay, *The Wrath of Athena* (Baltimore & London 1983), 97-106, 241-4, and, for the first song, G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore & London 1979), 1-65, esp. 45-6.)

8) R.M. Newton, *Odysseus and Hephaestus in the Odyssey*, *CJ* 83 (1987), 12-20.

9) G.P. Rose, *The Song of Ares and Aphrodite* (Ph.D. U. Calif. 1969), 6-14 gives seventeen corresponding elements (three are only potential correspondences) between the song of Ares and Aphrodite and Odysseus' defeat of the suitors. These

Hephaestus both return to households which have become disorderly in the absence of the *kyrios*, and reassert their authority by guile allied to technical skill¹⁰). Nevertheless, while the song of Ares and Aphrodite has certainly been shown to have a bearing on Odysseus' defeat of the suitors, the parallels, however many are collected, are not considered 'mechanically exact'¹¹). The two situations appear disparate not least in the matter of adultery (in the modern sense): Aphrodite and Ares commit it for all to see, but Penelope and the suitors do not. The song of Ares and Aphrodite presents Odysseus with the dreadful possibility of a wife conniving at adultery in the absence of her husband¹²), an eventuality which, in the case of Penelope, never comes to pass. Penelope is seen as a type of wifely fidelity, and the marriage of Odysseus and Penelope as a model of perfection¹³).

It seems to me that Demodocus' song of divine adultery is not a digression from, or even a thematic contrast to, the main events of the *Odyssey*. Odysseus' defeat of the suitors has, as I shall show,

include such elements as the good looks and mental blindness of the antagonist, the hero's weakness, his intelligence, his return for revenge, and the possibility of financial restitution. Many of the seventeen elements are found to occur also in the story of Aegisthus' adultery with Clytaemnestra, the Cyclops episode, and Odysseus' exchanges with Eurymachus.

10) Hephaestus uses his skill as the divine metal smith to make a tamper-evident bed: Odysseus' bed, which he built himself, is to some extent tamper-evident too (ψ 184-204).

The motif of smithing is used of Odysseus in a simile when he blinds the Cyclops (ι 391-5). In some versions of the Cyclops-story, the hero really is a smith (J.G. Frazer, *Apollodorus*, II (Cambridge Mass. & London 1921), Appendix XIII, nos. 10, 11: 421-30). Homer's pastoral Cyclops shares with Hephaestus and Ares the role of *kyrios* returning to a household grown disorderly in his absence, but Polyphemus is himself defeated by the disorderly intruders. H. Petersmann, *Homer und das Märchen*, WS 15 (1981), 43-68 refers (52) to the story of Himphamp (U. Jahn, *Das Märchen von Himphamp*, Verein für Niederdeutsche Sprachforschung 2 (1891), 239-44), in which a smith hides under his bed with his ox-goad to punish his adulterous wife and her lover: at his magic command, the guilty pair are stuck together, and in the morning are driven through the village by the smith wielding the ox-goad.

11) H.W. Clarke, *The Art of the Odyssey* (Prentice-Hall 1967), 55.

12) The poet is using the activities of the gods to mirror those of the human characters, Garvie 294.

13) For this view, see Gladstone 461-5; Newton 18-20; Olson 139; H. W. Petersmann, *Conjugal Love*, in: M. Παΐζη-Αποστολοπούλου (ed.), *Εὐχὴν Ὀδυσσεῖ* (Ithaca 1995), 75-87: 83-5.

essential elements shared with a widely-known folk-tale. Demodocus' song rehearses in miniature the essential elements of Odysseus' defeat of the suitors, rather as the dumb-show in *Hamlet* rehearses the events leading to Claudius marrying Gertrude and becoming king, or as the performance of the 'tragic' history of Pyramus and Thisbe rearranges the elements of the trysts in the forest of the main characters in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The song of Ares and Aphrodite anticipates, in the world of irresponsible and hilarious divine comedy, the deadly serious situation confronting Odysseus on his return to Ithaca¹⁴). It provides hints, not only for the *method* of defeating the suitors, but also of the *reason for* and *justification of* their fate. The episode serves as an 'indication to the reader' (Andersen 1987: 8) to think about μοιχεία: it prefigures, and enhances the significance of Odysseus' triumph over the suitors. Through it, the poet is communicating with his audience, and manipulating their reception of his presentation of the elements of the ancient folk-tale (of the return of the husband/lover in the nick of time to prevent the (re)marriage of his wife/mistress) so that the audience are encouraged to regard the suitors as μοιχοί. The rudeness and bad manners of the suitors are not an adequate justification for their punishment, and Odysseus does not mention their manners, χ 36-8¹⁵), when he accuses them of wasting his household, bedding his maids βιάως, and courting his wife when he is still alive. It is important to understand that μοιχεία (to which we shall return later), although it is usually translated 'adultery' has a much wider range of meaning. Μοιχεία takes in a variety of different kinds of unauthorised sexual behaviour, which can be punished with impunity by a kyrios. The mere unauthorized entry of Odysseus' house by the suitors may be regarded as an attack on the chastity of its womenfolk in a society where women are ideologically restricted to the house, the domain of intimate life¹⁶). This is the first pebble,

14) B. Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey* (Hermes Einzelschrift 30; Wiesbaden 1974), 155 calls it a 'minor replica' of Odysseus' defeat of the suitors.

15) Nor, although he is aware of them, their plots to murder Telemachus (ν 425-6 = ξ 180-2). He is aware that the suitors' kinsmen are likely to seek vengeance for the deaths of their relatives (ψ 117-122).

16) Women in the Homeric poems leave their houses, of course, but for specific purposes, such as fetching water (eg κ 107-8), doing laundry (eg X 153-6; ζ 31-40; 58-9; 90-95), visiting a neighbour or relative (eg Z 377-80): cf. the excursions of

then, which I wish to add to the pile of interpretations of this episode: that the story of Ares and Aphrodite encourages the audience to regard the suitors as *μοιχοί*, although their suit in itself could be morally neutral in terms of the bargain between Penelope and Odysseus permitting Penelope's remarriage at the end of an agreed period (σ 257-70).

Hephaestus accepts the promise of compensation for Ares' insult to his marriage (θ 358). The divine adulterers suffer no serious consequences for their misdeeds, and Hephaestus, who accepts material payment for Ares' misconduct with his wife, appears foolish into the bargain. Hephaestus' uncomfortable realisation that the gods are laughing at *him*¹⁷) and his *τέχνας* as well as at the adulterers hardly amounts to triumph¹⁸), but since Ares is immortal, Hephaestus is in no position to kill Ares as the *μοιχός* caught in the act. The suitors offer compensation for their consumption of Odysseus' food and drink, and a further *τιμή* of twenty oxen apiece, together with bronze and gold until his heart is softened (χ 55-9). Unlike Hephaestus, Odysseus will not listen to talk of material compensation, but insists upon his determination to kill all the suitors for their *ὑπερβασίη* 'transgression', χ 64. The second pebble which this essay seeks to add concerns the example presented by Hephaestus' acceptance of compensation from the adulterer. The outraged husband who accepts *μοιχάγρια* risks becoming a figure of fun, like Hephaestus. By contrast with Hephaestus, Odysseus refuses compensation. Even the entire patrimony of all the suitors, and anything else they could add to it from elsewhere, would not suffice to compensate him for their insult to his honour (χ 61-4: cf. I 379-87). Unlike Hephaestus, Odysseus cannot be bought off by the offer

women in Athenian society described by D. Cohen, *The Social Context of Adultery at Athens*, in: P. Cartledge, P. Millett, & S. Todd (ed.), *Nomos* (Cambridge 1990), 147-65. The presence of even a shoemaker in a house in the absence of its *kyrios* ought to be an outrage to any right-thinking man, according to Aristophanes' *Proboulos* (*Lys.* 414-9).

17) θ 326 = A 599. Burkert 135-7 indicates how the gods resolve a painful situation in A by laughing at Hephaestus. Garvie on θ 326 suggests that the alternative reading *ἐργ' ἀγέλαστα* is to be preferred over *ἐργα γελαστά* at 307. Hephaestus is in no laughing mood, and the divine hilarity at 326 is not really what he wants.

18) For the view that Hephaestus triumphs over the adulterers on his return, see Ø. Andersen, *Odysseus and the Wooden Horse*, SO 52 (1977), 5-18: 13.

of material compensation. The discomfiture of Hephaestus, the divine figure who accepts compensation for adultery, enhances the triumph of Odysseus, the mortal hero who rejects compensation and the attendant ridicule, and insists on punishing the *μοιχοί* with death.

1. *Legitimate courtship or μοιχεία?*

The crimes of the suitors have been variously interpreted¹⁹), but Odysseus himself accuses them on three counts: wasting his household; sleeping with his maids by force; and paying court to his wife while he is still alive without fear of the gods or of nemesis from men (χ 35-40). These must be the primary objections to the suitors from Odysseus' point of view. The suitors pay court to Penelope according to the terms of a bargain made between Odysseus and Penelope before Odysseus left for Troy (σ 265-70); their courtship is not, therefore, self-evidently wicked. Viewed simply in terms of this bargain, the suitors' courtship of Penelope is entirely permissible: the motif of their courtship is capable of being developed to exonerate the suitors or complicated with further intricacies of plot to incriminate them. According to the terms of the bargain, the suitors are not culpable in paying court to Penelope after the elapse of the time she was to wait for Odysseus, as long as they have no reason to suppose that Odysseus is alive. The phrase *ἐπεὶ θάνε διὸς Ὀδυσσεύς* is used by Telemachus, Antinoos, and Penelope²⁰). On

19) According to W. Allen jnr, *The Theme of the Suitors in the Odyssey*, TAPhA 70 (1939), 104-24, they resemble tragic heroes, blinded by ἄτη. They are ἀναιδείς, and so beyond the reach of any social sanction; ὑβρίζοντες, they perform αἵσχεα πολλά (A. A. Long, *Morals and Values in Homer*, JHS 90 (1970), 121-39). The pressure they exert by exploiting the obligation to entertain them is an affront to the gods (H.L. Levy, *The Odyssean Suitors and the Host-Guest Relationship*, TAPhA 94 (1963), 145-53) but this would not really justify Odysseus in killing them. Their feasts, which are more like looting, are a symbolic destruction of the house of Odysseus. Their feasts include no sacrifices, they fail to share equally, and they refuse all consideration to strangers (S. Saïd, *Les crimes des prétendants: la maison d'Ulysse et les festins de l'Odyssee*, in: *Études de littérature ancienne* (Paris Pr. de l'École Norm. Sup. 1979), 9-49; E. Kearns, *The Return of Odysseus; A Homeric Theoxeny*, CQ n. s. 32 (1982), 2-8). They want to divide up Odysseus' property and destroy his power-base (J. Halverson, *The Succession Issue in the Odyssey*, G&R 33 (1986), 19-28).

20) α 366 (Telemachus), β 96 (Antinoos attributes the phrase to Penelope), τ 140 (Penelope); cf. πατέρ' ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσα (Telemachus, β 46), αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς ὤλετο τῆλε (Eurymachus, β 181-2).

other occasions, however, Telemachus and Penelope express uncertainty whether Odysseus is alive or dead²¹). Odysseus is not being perverse when he accuses the suitors of paying court to his wife while he is still alive: the poet has shown them repeatedly ignoring warnings that Odysseus is still alive and about to return home²²). Such warnings should be enough to make them desist from their courtship.

The terms of the bargain, which would provide the suitors with some justification for their presence, are not mentioned until long after the audience has been encouraged to disapprove of the suitors, who are introduced with the epithet ἀγήνορες, 'haughty' (α 144). Athene, disguised as Mentès, complains of their display of haughty arrogance, and thereafter the poet presents us with repeated instances of their objectionable behaviour²³). Athene advises Telemachus, if he finds out on his journey to Pylos that his father is dead, to give his mother to a husband, and then to consider how to kill the suitors in his house, either δόλῳ or ἀμφοδόν (α 289-96). Stephanie West comments that Athene is the first to advocate the massacre of the suitors, and this divine mandate stifles any qualms about the justification for the slaughter. Athene's appeal to the example of Orestes' vengeance on Aegisthus implies that the suitors are as guilty as Aegisthus²⁴): ὥς ἀπόλοιτο καὶ ἄλλος ὅτις τοιαῦτά γε ρέζοι' (α 47) is the conclusion to her account of Orestes' vengeance on Aegisthus. Athene does not spell out the reasons for the justification of the projected slaughter: she assumes Telemachus will understand what she is implying. The comparisons of the suitors with Aegisthus²⁵), and later with Paris (π 417-33), and Menelaus' description of them as weaklings who want to get into a hero's bed (δ 333-4) all contribute to the impression that we are to regard them

21) Telemachus: πατήρ δ' ἐμὸς ἄλλοθι γαίης ζῶει ὃ γ' ἡ τέθνηκε (β 131-2); οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν, ζῶει ὃ γ' ἡ τέθνηκεν (δ 109-10). Penelope: εἴ που ἔτι ζῶει καὶ ὄρᾳ φάος ἡλίοιο εἰ δ' ἤδη τέθνηκε καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισιν (υ 207-8); ἐχράετ' ἐσθιέμεν καὶ πινέμεν ἐμμενὲς αἰεὶ ἀνδρὸς ἀποικοιμένιο πολὺν χρόνον (φ 69-70).

22) β 174-6; υ 350-7. Odysseus gives a warning to Amphinomos (σ 143-50) and sees for himself that it is ignored.

23) β 177-80, 325-6; δ 630-72; 841-7; π 371-86; 422-30; ρ 446-56; 462-3; σ 341-404; υ 287-302.

24) S. West, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, I (Oxford 1988), 113.

25) α 298-300; γ 263-78; δ 521-37 (cf δ 669-71; 778-86; 842-7; χ 53)

as guilty of the crime of Aegisthus and Paris: μοιχεία. In fact one could say that Athene's position has always been that the suitors must die because of the μοιχεία they commit: this is the only way to explain the sequence of thought in the association of her advice that Telemachus should give his mother to a husband and consider how to kill the suitors, with her urging him to emulate the vengeance of Orestes on the adulterous Aegisthus. The impression that Athene regards the suitors as μοιχοί is further reinforced when she foretells that Odysseus will kill the suitors for their boldness in giving ἔδνα to his wife²⁶).

2. Μοιχεία in secondary narratives

The song of Ares and Aphrodite is simply one of a whole series of narratives subsidiary to the main plot which rehearse its concerns with the awful possibility of μοιχεία in the absence of the husband, and the need to punish such μοιχεία when it occurs. As we have seen, the first of these deals with Orestes' vengeance on Aegisthus, a theme introduced by Athene and elaborated by Nestor and Menelaus. The second song of Demodocus offers an example of divine μοιχεία and its entrapment by the kyrios on his return; it explores the idea of μοιχεία in the abstract, as if it were using the gods as personifications of the forces they represent. The theme of μοιχεία is apparent again in Demodocus' third song, which relates how the Wooden Horse was taken into Troy, and concludes with Odysseus and Menelaus making their way to the house of Deiphobus (Helen's Trojan 'husband' after the death of Paris), where the fighting was most intense (θ 517-9), surely because the guilt of Helen's abduction has passed from Paris to Deiphobus, and the whole point of the Trojan war is to recover a wife stolen by a μοιχός. Odysseus himself tells his Phaeacian hosts the unfortunate story of Agamemnon, who failed to suspect any danger when he returned to his house from the war, and was killed by his wife and her lover (λ 409-26). The recurrent theme of μοιχεία in all these stories, together with the warnings received by the suitors that Odysseus is still alive,

26) v 376-8; 394-6 (cf ι 458-9). On the significance of ἔδνα see W. K. Lacey, *Homeric ἔδνα and Penelope's κύριος*, JHS 86 (1966), 55-68.

encourage the audience to take a pejorative view of the suitors. Only when this view is firmly established is anything said about the bargain between Odysseus and Penelope, which would have provided some justification for their suit.

3. *Penelope's remarriage at the end of an agreed period.*

According to the terms of the bargain Penelope says Odysseus made with her when he departed for Troy, she was to remain in the household, deferring to his parents, until Telemachus grew a beard: then she was to marry whomever she wished, and leave her home. Penelope could be deceiving the suitors with this story, as Büchner suggests²⁷), since she uses it as a preface to taunting the suitors with their meanness until they bring her valuable presents, to the secret delight of her husband (σ 275-83). Even if the bargain is a trick, the suitors have still been observing its terms: they did not present themselves as suitors until the sixteenth year after Odysseus' departure for Troy²⁸) (which might be a reasonable time for Telemachus to begin his beard), and they allowed themselves to be deceived for more than three years by the trick of the web. Only since the ruse was revealed and the web completed have they used their consumption of the household's wealth to exert pressure on Penelope to marry one of them in order to preserve what remains of Odysseus' wealth for Telemachus to inherit (β 111-28). Penelope tells her disguised visitor that she is unable to think of another tactic for delay, and feels the inevitability of her remarriage closing in on her (σ 156-61).

The terms of this bargain between Odysseus and Penelope are found in a story-shape occurring all over the world²⁹), in which a

27) W. Büchner, *Die Penelopeszenen in der Odyssee*, Hermes 75 (1940), 129-67: 139-41.

28) Odysseus is returning home in the 20th year (β 175): he has been absent for 19 full years + part of the next. Antinoos complains (β 89-110; cf. τ 138-56; ω 139-46) that Penelope has been confounding her suitors, by secret messages and by the trick of the web, for three full years and part of a fourth. So (19+)-(3+)=(16?+).

29) The motif of the husband/lover who returns in the nick of time to find his wife/mistress about to marry another: W. Splettstößer, *Der heimkehrende Gatte und sein Weib in der Weltliteratur* (Berlin 1899); Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Copenhagen 1955-8), N681; A. A. Aarne, *The Types of the Folk-Tale*, a

classification and bibliography (Helsinki 1964), no. 974; E. Baughman, *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America* (Indiana Folklore Series 20; The Hague 1966), II 974 N681; H. L. Gee, *Folktales of Yorkshire* (London 1952), 100-1 (Leonard de Reresby, who returns through the power of prayer from his prison in the Holy Land to arrive at Thrybergh on the morning of his wife's remarriage); R. S. Boggs, *Index of Spanish Folktales*, Folklore Fellows Communications 90 (1930), 84-107, no. 750a; cf. 896 (husband prevented from remarrying abroad by arrival of his wife at the ceremony); J. Bolte & G. Polivka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, II (Leipzig 1919-30), 318 N92 (a fisherman rescues an enchanted princess, and finds her again as she is about to wed another); *The Complete Grimm's Fairy-Tales* (London 1975), 425-30: 'The King of the Golden Mountain' (a king leaves his wife to visit his father. He returns when she is about to wed another, and punishes the whole wedding party, including his wife); N. K. Chadwick, *Russian Heroic Poetry* (Cambridge 1932), 80-90 (Dobrynya Nikitich returns after an absence of twelve years to find his wife being compelled by the Tsar to marry another); V. Zhirmunsky, *The Epic of Alpamysh and the Return of Odysseus*, PBA 52 (1966), 267-85 (Alpamysh returns after seven years to find his half-brother, Ultan-taz, plotting to murder his infant son and about to marry his wife Barchin); C. C. Fauriel, *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne*, II (Paris 1824-5), 140-5, no. 11 (Ιαννάκης returns to prevent his wife's marriage to a Turk); R. Beaton, *The Folk Poetry of Modern Greece* (Cambridge 1980), 29 (12e), 30 (12f) (ὁ μικροΚωνσταντίνος returns from captivity to prevent his wife's remarriage); G. Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. J. M. Rigg, II (Navarre Society 1921), 370-86, Tenth Day, ix (M. Torello is transported home from his entertainment by Saladin as his wife is about to remarry at the end of the time she was to wait for him); G. Finsler, *Homer I¹*, pt. I Der Dichter und seine Welt (Berlin & Leipzig 1924), 37-8 (the North American Indian story of Odhibwa, whose brothers all want to marry his wife); J. E. Doan, *Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh as Craftsman and Trickster*, Béaloideas 50 (1982), 54-89: 84: Eleanor Kavanagh & Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh; M. J. Murphy, *Now You're Talking* (Belfast 1975), 24-7 no. 26 (a wife presumes her husband dead when he is detained at the labour of his daughter. He arrives at the church as she is about to marry another); F. J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, I (Boston 1882-98), 187-208, R. Allen, *King Horn* (New York & London 1984), J. Hall, *King Horn* (Oxford 1901) (parallel versions of three manuscripts) (Hind Horn rescues his betrothed, Rymenhild when she is to be married to king Modi; he rescues her a second time, from marriage with Fikenhild); F. J. Mather jnr., *King Ponthus and the Fair Sidone*, Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 12 (1897), 1-150, esp. 97-105 (Ponthus rescues Sidone as she is to be married to the king of Burgone). The husband/lover may simply intervene from a distance to prevent the marriage: R. L. Tongue & K. M. Briggs, *Folktales of England* (London 1965), 94; cf. K. M. Briggs, *A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales*, II (London 1971), 39 (the absent hero is Sir Francis Drake, who fires a cannon-shot which lands in front of the bridal party of his would-be supplanter); A. Dickson, *Valentine and Orson* (Early English Text Society o.s. 204; New York 1929), esp. 104-7; 189; 230-3; 296; 312-6 (Clerymonde is almost married to the king of India and later to king Hugon of Hungary: both times Valentine rescues her, but dies before he can marry her. Clerymonde takes the veil after his death).

departing husband/lover requires his wife to wait for him for an agreed period: if, at the end of that time, he has not returned, she is free to (re)marry. Of course, the husband/lover is absent for the whole of the stipulated period, and sometimes longer. He returns home, often by magic, in the space of a single night³⁰), to the (re)marriage ceremony of his wife/mistress. The husband/lover may regard the new bridegroom (and his supporters) as wicked: he may fall on the interloper(s) and kill him/them³¹); the original pair of lovers may flee together³²); or the new bridegroom may simply run away³³). Alternatively, the husband/lover may treat the (re)marriage as a pardonable mistake³⁴), and in some cases the disappointed new

30) G. Huet, *Le Retour merveilleux du mari*, *Revue des Traditions Populaires* 32 (1917), 97-109.

31) King Horn kills the new bridegroom Fikenhild and his followers (Allen (ed.) lines 1519-26); cf. Hind Horn's slaughter of the new bridegroom, king Modi, and Rymenhild's second narrow escape, from marriage to the treacherous Fikenild (Child 189-90). Odhibwa shoots his brothers, who are quarrelling over his wife, with his magic arrows (Finsler 38). The King of the Golden Mountain draws his sword and cries 'All heads off but mine' to punish his wife, her new husband, and the company at the wedding (Grimm 430). Ponthus kills the bridegroom of the fair Sidone in a joust (Mather 102-3). Sir William Bradshaw, from Lancashire, prepares with his tenants for vengeance when he returns from the wars to find his wife, Lady Mabel, remarried to a Welsh knight: he pursues the new husband and kills him (H. Bett, *English Legends* (London, New York, Toronto, Sydney 1952), 19). Alpamysh kills the usurper Ultan-taz and his followers when he reveals himself as Barchin's true husband at the feast celebrating Ultan-taz's marriage to her (Zhirmunsky 270). Dobrynya Nikitich does not kill his wife's new bridegroom, but beats him for grieving her by giving false news that her husband is dead (Chadwick 89-90).

32) Valentine disguises himself as a doctor to visit Clerymonde, who is feigning madness to delay her wedding with the king of Inde: they flee together on a magic wooden horse (Dickson 231, 293-6); Cearbhall O Dálaigh comes disguised as a beggar to the marriage feast of Eleanor Kavanagh, behaves as a fool, and he and Eleanor manage to elope (Doan 84). Ιαννάκης arrives just in time as his wife is to be married to a Turk: he sweeps her onto his horse, and makes his escape as quickly as he came (Fauriel II 140-5).

33) Clerymonde is deceived by the wicked King Hugon of Hungary into believing her betrothed Valentine is dead: when the disguised Valentine undeceives her, Hugon flees, and is killed by the green knight (Dickson 321-4). The wicked second bridegroom runs away to England when the first husband appears in the church where his wife is to be remarried (in indecent haste) after her husband is presumed drowned (Murphy 27). There is no sign of the suitor favoured by Sir George Sydenham for his daughter when Sir Francis Drake returns to claim his secretly-betrothed fiancée (Briggs 93-4).

34) The second bridegroom accepts his dismissal: Boccaccio 385; Chasiotis 88;

bridegroom may even receive a kind of consolation prize in the form of marriage to the original husband's sister³⁵).

The bargain between Odysseus and Penelope allows for the possibility of courtship and a second marriage made in good faith, in accordance with the instructions of Odysseus as he left for Troy. This means that there are two possible views which may be taken of the suitors' courtship: either it is a perfectly legitimate courtship of a widow after the expiry of the time her husband said she should wait for him, which turns out to be an understandable and pardonable error when the husband returns against all probability; or it is an intolerable intrusion into a household in the absence of its *kyrios*. Before we know anything about the bargain, we are encouraged to take the latter view, firstly by details in the primary narrative: Athene's advice to Telemachus that the suitors must be killed; the view taken of the suitors by Nestor and Menelaus; the behaviour of the suitors themselves, not least in ignoring warnings that Odysseus is on his way back; and Tiresias' prophecy that Odysseus will find *πήματα* in his house in the form of arrogant men eating his livelihood and paying court to his wife: Tiresias tells Odysseus *'ἀποτίσσαι' their βίας*, killing them openly or by a trick³⁶). The secondary narratives reinforce condemnation of the suitors by dwelling on the theme of adultery, firstly through Athene's comparison of the suitors with Aegisthus, the seducer of Clytaemnestra, through Menelaus' account of the vengeance of Orestes on Aegisthus, and through the songs of Demodocus dealing with the punish-

de Coussemaker 165. The fisherman's son who comes to claim his bride as she is about to marry another tells her to tell her new bridegroom "wenn man den alten Schlüssel gefunden hat, bedürfe man des neuen nicht" (Bolte & Polivka 319-20).

35) Thor gives up his bride and accepts the sister of Lovmand, the original suitor (Arwidsson I 68).

36) λ 115-20 (ι 534-5 approx. = λ 114-5). The suitors are the *πήματα* the Cyclops prayed Odysseus would find in his house on his return, just as he had found Odysseus and his men as malevolent intruders in his cave (ι 535). When Odysseus arrives in Ithaca, Athene adds to the unattractive picture he is forming of the suitors by apprising him of their ambush to kill Telemachus on his return from Pylos (ν 425-6, information repeated by Eumaeus, ξ 180-2). Eumaeus builds up further disapproval of the suitors (ο 328-9; 375-6) so that Odysseus expresses an unfavourable opinion to Telemachus of their rough treatment of the maids and waste of the household (π 106-111). Penelope's complaints about the suitors (τ 130-3), and her opinion (and Eurycleia's), of the maids (τ 154; 498) reinforce disapproval of them.

ment of adultery by Hephaestus and by Menelaus (θ 517-20). When Odysseus arrives in Ithaca, Athene adds to the unsavoury impression of the suitors by reference to their plot to kill Telemachus (ν 425-6, information repeated by Eumaeus ξ 180-2). Eumaeus builds up further disapproval of the suitors (ο 328-9, 375-6), so that Odysseus himself expresses an unfavourable opinion to Telemachus of their rough treatment of the maids and waste of the household (π 106-11). Only then do we hear of the bargain between Odysseus and Penelope which offers some justification for the presence of the suitors (σ 257-70).

The bargain between husband and wife at parting is a strong element in the story-shape of the husband/lover who returns in the nick of time to find the marriage feast of his wife/mistress, but the poet of the *Odyssey* places it late, long after the audience's assessment of the suitors has been formed. The song of Ares and Aphrodite is part of the poet's use of secondary narrative to direct attention away from the bargain of the story-shape, which gives the suitors some justification (it does not excuse their appalling behaviour in Odysseus' house), and towards the idea of μοιχεία by the suitors, requiring punishment not by fines and compensation, but by death.

4. Μοιχεία in the houses of Hephaestus and Odysseus

Μοιχεία, usually translated 'adultery', is a term applied to illicit sexual intercourse, in secret, on an uncertain number of occasions, over an uncertain period of time. It is achieved by persuasion, not force, and because such persuasion was thought to corrupt the soul, μοιχεία carries a more serious penalty than rape³⁷). A man who caught another man committing μοιχεία with a woman under his control/protection³⁸) might kill him³⁹), or subject him to physical

37) Lys. I 32-33. See also C. Carey, *Lysias, Selected Speeches* (Cambridge 1989), 80.

38) In this category Dem. XXIII 53 lists wife, mother, sister, daughter, or concubine kept for bearing legitimate children. There is evidence to suggest that a kyrios had the Tötungsrecht in cases of μοιχεία by members of his household (Arist. *Fr.* 611: Hippomenes killed his daughter and her lover; *Fr.* 593: a king of Tenedos enforced the death penalty even against his son). However, a fine for the forcible

abuse, or hold him prisoner until he could provide sureties for payment of an agreed sum. The man had to admit to *μοιχεία* and witnesses were required⁴⁰). Aphrodite, the wife of Hephaestus, serves as the object of the *μοιχεία* committed by Ares, who would find it difficult to deny his guilt before the divine witnesses summoned. Like Hephaestus, Odysseus comes home to find *μοιχεία* in his household. He accuses the suitors of wasting his *οἶκος* (Cf. Lysias I 33), sleeping with his maidservants by force⁴¹), and paying court to his wife while he is still alive (χ 36-8). The two last accusations amount to illicit sex with women under Odysseus' control/protection. *Μοιχεία*, in other words, has already been committed in Odysseus' household by the suitors with the maids. Their treatment of the maids is compounded by their advances to Penelope, and their offer of marriage gifts to her. Athene predicts that Odysseus will kill the suitors for their boldness in giving *ἔδνα* to his wife (ν 376-8, 394-6; cf. ι 458-9).

The gifts solicited by Penelope from the suitors have their counterpart in the gifts given to Aphrodite by Ares to influence her

seduction by an outsider of a slave belonging to a household is prescribed in the law-code of Gortyn (R. F. Willetts (ed.), *The Law-code of Gortyn*, II (Berlin 1967), 11-13), which also stipulates payment of compensation for *μοιχεία* with a free woman in her father's, brother's, or husband's house (20-3): only in the event of default are other penalties permitted (33-36).

39) Lysias I 50 suggests that a *kyrios* who exercised the right to kill a *μοιχός* was likely to face prosecution on grounds of procedural irregularity. By the fourth century it was usual to accept a monetary compensation rather than kill a *μοιχός* caught in the act. Euphiletus complains, Lys. I 36, that if he is condemned for killing his wife's lover, Eratosthenes (who offered money when caught, Lys. I 25, 29), then thieves (whom it was legitimate to kill when caught stealing in the night, Dem. XXIV 113) would call themselves *μοιχοί* to be sure of receiving a lesser penalty than death.

40) Carey (1989), 59; 79 (on I §25), A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens*, I (Oxford 1968), 33 & n.3. The law-code of Gortyn (II 20 ff) provided for detention of an adulterer against the payment of compensation: if he failed to pay, his captor could do what he liked with him.

41) A. Heubeck, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, III (Oxford 1992), 227 refers to "the false assertion that the maids were forcibly violated" as incompatible with ν 6-8 and χ 445. The maids are said to be roughly treated at π 110 and υ 319. But *μοιχεία* is not really an offence against a woman (R. Just, *Women in Athenian law and life* (London 1989), 68). *Βιαιώς* is used of the suitors' offence against Odysseus in sleeping with the maids: they eat *βιαιώς*, too (β 237). "*Ἔργα βία* are what the suitors do (β 236) and punishment of their *βία* is expressed in *ἀποτίσσει* (λ 118; π 255;), *ἀποτίσεται* (γ 212; ρ 540): cf ψ 31.

decision⁴²). The epithets κύων, κυνῶπις, frequent in contexts of adultery, are used of the adulterous Aphrodite by Hephaestus, and by Odysseus of the faithless Melantho and of the suitors⁴³). The verb ἀτιμάζω is associated with the idea of payment of compensation, expressed as τίνω, in both the song of Ares and Aphrodite, and in the behaviour of the suitors towards Odysseus and his family. Hephaestus complains that Aphrodite ἀτιμάζει him⁴⁴), and demands the return of the gifts he gave to her father at the time of the marriage. By demanding the return of the ἔδνα, Hephaestus is divorcing his wife⁴⁵). In Athenian law, a husband was bound to divorce an adulterous wife on pain of ἀτιμία and suspension of citizen rights⁴⁶). The maidservants ἀτιμάζουσι Odysseus by sleeping with the suitors (π 317; τ 498; χ 418). In the *Odyssey*, ἀτιμάζω and ἀτιμάω are virtually confined to the behaviour of the suitors towards Odysseus and his family⁴⁷), and are associated with the idea of the payment of compensation⁴⁸). The τιμή offered by the suitors in compensation (as distinct from restitution of goods consumed) for their crime is analogous to the τιμή which Agamemnon demands from the Trojans together with the return of Helen and the κτήματα stolen with her, if Menelaus kills Paris in the duel⁴⁹).

42) θ 269; σ 279; 290-301. For the view that neither the suitors' gifts at σ 279, 290-301, nor Ares' gifts to Aphrodite are ἔδνα, see Lacey, 58. Aegisthus ἀνήψεν ἀγάλματα (γ 274) when Clytaemnestra gave in, but these are more likely thank-offerings for answered prayers than presents for Clytaemnestra (K. Kunst, *Die Schuld der Klytaimnestra*, WS 44 (1924/5), 18-32; 143-54: 19).

43) Aphrodite: θ 319; Melantho: σ 338; τ 91; suitors: χ 351. Cf. Helen: Γ 180; Z 344; 356; δ 145; Clytaemnestra: λ 424; Trojans N 623. Outside the context of adultery, Hera is described as κυνῶπις for wanting to conceal Hephaestus because he is lame (Σ 396).

44) θ 309. Hephaestus is slighted by Aphrodite in favour of another lover: cf. ζ 283 (Nausicaa's projected rejection (ἀτιμάζειν) of her Phaeacian suitors in favour of a stranger); Zeus slights (ἀτιμάζειν) Hera when he gives birth to Athene *H. Ap* 311-5 (Garvie 302). Cf. also υ 133 (ἀτιμήσασα of Penelope's treatment of Odysseus in disguise).

45) θ 317-9. Gifts given by the bridegroom to the bride's kyrios on her marriage are returnable if the marriage is ended other than by the death of one of the parties: cf β 130-3; Telemachus would have to repay Icarius if Penelope were sent back ἀέκουσα (Lacey 1966, 58; D. M. MacDowell, *The Law in Classical Athens* (London 1978), 88; Just (1989), 73-4; Garvie, 304).

46) Dem. 59, 87. See Chantraine, *DÉLG* s.v. ἄτιμος.

47) A.T. Edwards, *Achilles in the Odyssey* (Meisenheim am Glan 1985), 57 & n36.

48) Expressed as τίνω (ξ 164; υ 167) or implied (φ 99; σ 144; φ 427).

49) Γ 284-91. If the τιμή is not forthcoming, a ποινή will be exacted: cf ξ 70;

If we regard μοιχεία, not as adultery in the modern sense, but as illicit sex with a woman under the control/protection of another man, a number of issues in the latter part of the *Odyssey* become easier to understand, not least the savage execution of the disloyal maids⁵⁰), and the automatic assumption, made plain from the outset, that the penalty for the suitors' crimes is death. Odysseus is exercising the *Tötungsrecht* of the kyrios in a case of μοιχεία. The episode of Ares and Aphrodite prefigures the situation of μοιχεία in the house of Odysseus during his absence in a number of ways; the epithets for adulterers; the gifts given to sway the woman's decision; the imprisonment of the adulterers by means of guile; and the offer of τιμή as compensation⁵¹). Hephaestus accepts surety for the payment of compensation: Odysseus rejects compensation, and punishes the suitors and their mistresses with death.

5. *Hephaestus' acceptance of compensation as a negative example for Odysseus*

With his song of Ares and Aphrodite, Demodocus is the first to draw Odysseus' attention to the possibility of μοιχεία in a household in the absence of the kyrios. The divine hilarity occasioned by Ares' imprisonment arises, at least in part, from the prospect of undignified physical punishments for Ares, who is not well-liked⁵²): the gods are anticipating the discomfiture of a bully. But Hephaestus, the injured husband, himself becomes a figure of fun, because he dwells on the financial implications of the escapade, taking no action in the presence of the other gods, but allowing them to make jokes about their readiness to change places with this particular adulterer, until Poseidon offers to stand surety for Ares' fine⁵³),

117: M. Fernández-Galiano, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, III (Oxford 1992), 231-2.

50) and perhaps the extreme cruelty of the punishment of Melanthius, who assisted the suitors against Odysseus (χ 142-6). Melanthius might not be dead when he is mutilated (M. Davies, *Odyssey* 22. 474-7: *Murder or Mutilation?* CQ 44 (1994), 534-6).

51) Rose 6-9 suggests further points of comparison: the violation of hospitality; furtiveness; the good looks, brutality, and folly of the adulterer; the beauty of the woman; the physical weakness and intelligence of the hero.

52) Harrison 33 n3. For the unpopularity of Ares, see E 891; Φ 403-34.

53) The pledge to stand surety, the ἔγγυη, is a promise and the ἔγγυητής is responsible for ensuring that payment is made: he is not himself the debtor (E. Cantarella, *La EITVH nell' Odissea*, SIFC 36 (1964), 199-214).

whether Ares defaults or not, and presses Hephaestus (who at first demurs) to accept his offer. Not only does the episode of Ares and Aphrodite, by presenting Odysseus with an instance of *μοιχεία* in the house of an absent *kyrios*, encourage him to regard the suitors as *μοιχοί*, but it also offers Odysseus an example to avoid, an *exemplum negativum* for the time he finds himself in a position analogous to that of Hephaestus. Odysseus takes care to secure the doors of his house⁵⁴), ensuring that the suitors are imprisoned there almost as securely as Ares in Hephaestus' bed. The suitors, like Ares, offer material compensation for the slight to Odysseus' honour. The mockery incurred by Hephaestus in his attitude of complaining cuckold is a strong disincentive to Odysseus to accept the offer of compensation, and he rejects all notion of a financial transaction in favour of the extreme penalty. He is severe, but not ridiculous. Hephaestus catches the adulterer by means of guile, but spoils his triumph by allowing himself to be inveigled into accepting compensation and permitting the adulterer to go free: Odysseus catches the adulterers by means of guile, and perfects his triumph by inflicting the severest penalty on the criminals.

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54) He stands in the doorway on the threshold of the hall, *χ* 2. Eumaeus is to order the women to lock the doors leading from the hall to their quarters and Philoetius is to lock the doors of the courtyard, *φ* 235-41.